

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-20

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R 111950Z JAN 74
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
USCINCSO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, HO, ES

SUBJECT: HONDURAS-EL SALVADOR DISPUTE: COMMITTEE OF SEVEN
MEETS

1. THE COMMITTEE OF SEVEN MET JANUARY 10 TO HEAR HONDURAN FOREIGN MINISTER BATRES GIVE HIS COUNTRY'S VERSION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE MEXICO TALKS, WHICH ENDED IN DECEMBER.
2. BATRES' ACCOUNT OF THE MEETINGS ADDED LITTLE TO WHAT WE ALREADY KNEW. LIKE GALINDO POHL OF EL SALVADOR BEFORE, HE SAID THAT THE MEETING BROKE DOWN OVER THE QUESTION OF WHETHER TO ATTEMPT TO DELINEATE THE BOUNDARIES. AT THE FOURTH AND FINAL STAGE OF THE DISCUSSIONS, HE SAID, HONDURAS WANTED TO SET ABOUT RESOLVING THE BOUNDARY QUESTION, BUT EL SALVADOR WISHED INSTEAD TO TRY TO ESTABLISH

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THE QTE BASES AND NORMS UNQTE FOR SETTLING THAT QUESTION.

BATRES READ TO THE COMMITTEE THE GUIDELINES (DIRECTRICES) WHICH HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN DECIDED BETWEEN THE TWO DELEGATIONS, BUT SAID THAT A DIFFERENCE OF INTERPRETATION AROSE BETWEEN THEM WHEN IT CAME TO THE FINAL MEETING. HE REITERATED HONDURAS' POSITION THAT THERE CAN BE NO TREATY, NO SETTLEMENT WITHOUT AT THE SAME TIME SETTLING THE BOUNDARY ISSUE.

3. BATRES SAID THAT HONDURAS HAD BEEN DISILLUSIONED BY EL SALVADOR'S DENUNCIATION OF THE PACT OF BOGOTA SO SOON AFTER EL SALVADOR HAD PROMISED AT JALAPA THAT

IT WAS PREPARED TO WORK OUT THE BOUNDARY QUESTION--WHICH QTE WAS EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE UNQTE OF WHAT EL SALVADOR DID.

4. BATRES SAID HIS GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN A DIALOGUE. BUT, HE SAID, HONDURAS IS UNWILLING TO GO BACK TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE UNLESS EL SALVADOR PREVIOUSLY QTE DEMONSTRATES THE POLITICAL WILL UNQTE TO RESOLVE THE DISPUTE.

5. ONE COMMITTEE MEMBER AFTER ANOTHER (ONLY THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC DID NOT SPEAK) EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING THE TALKS GOING AND URGED THAT HONDURAS AGREE TO SOME SORT OF CONTINUATION. SEVERAL ASKED FOR AN EXTENSION OF THE ACT OF WASHINGTON OF AUG. 21, 1973. BUT BATRES REFUSED TO BE BUDGED. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE PACT OF BOGOTA WOULD NO LONGER APPLY TO EL SALVADOR AFTER NOVEMBER 1974 AND SAID THAT HONDURAS WANTED ASSURANCE THAT IN CONTINUING TALKS EL SALVADOR WOULD NOT MERELY BE EATING UP THE REMAINING TIME IN WHICH EL SALVADOR COULD BE BROUGHT TO BAR UNDER THE PACT. QTE AT THIS MOMENT UNQTE, BATRES SAID, QTE WE RESERVE TO OURSELVES UNQTE THE DECISION OF WHICH STEP HONDURAS SHOULD TAKE NEXT. HE REITERATED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO QTE CLOSE THE DOOR UNQTE TO FURTHER TALKS AND UNDERLINED HIS WILLINGNESS TO TALK WITH THE COMMITTEE OR ANY OTHER GROUP, INCLUDING THE CENTRAL AMERICAN QTE NEIGHBORS, AT ANY TIME. UNQTE
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6. AFTER THE MEETING, ECUADORAN AMBASSADOR GALO LEORO POINTED OUT TO BATRES ARTICLE 4 OF THE PACT OF BOGOTA, WHICH PROVIDES THAT ARBITRATION CANNOT TAKE PLACE UNDER THE PACT WHILE OTHER NEGOTIATIONS ARE GOING ON. BATRES SAID HE WAS AWARE OF ARTICLE 4 AND SEEMED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THIS WAS A FACTOR IN HIS RELUCTANCE TO GO ON WITH TALKS WHICH WOULD BE TIME-CONSUMING BUT ULTIMATELY

UNFRUITFUL. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT IF BILATERAL TALKS ARE GOING ON, THERE CAN BE NO ARBITRATION. BATRES SAID PRIVATELY THAT PUBLIC OPINION IN HONDURAS WAS STRONGLY AGAINST CONTINUING THE MEXICO TALKS--LARGELY BECAUSE OF EL SALVADOR'S DENUNCIATION OF THE PACT OF BOGOTA.

7. AT THE REQUEST OF THE CHAIRMAN, BATRES REPORTED BRIEFLY ON THE RECENT SHOOTING INCIDENT IN THE BAY OF FONSECA (SALVADOR 98). HE SAID GOH AND GOES BORDER POLICE ORIGINALLY PLANNED TO HAVE A JOINT INVESTIGATION BUT THE SALVADORAN POLICE QTE DIDN'T SHOW UP UNQTE. HE SAID THE GOH WOULD HAVE ITS REPORT VERY SOON.

8. COMMENT: BATRES DID NOT SEEM INTRANSIGENT, BUT RATHER APPEARED DETERMINED TO KEEP HONDURAS' OPTIONS OPEN. WHILE HE DID NOT SAY SO IN SO MANY WORDS, IT APPEARED THAT THE HONDURAN GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET DECIDED WHAT ITS NEXT STEP WILL BE. SEVILLA SACASA, WHO CHAIRED THE MEETING, SAID AFTERWARD THAT HE REMAINS OPTIMISTIC THAT THE TWO SIDES COULD BE SET TO TALKING AGAIN BEFORE THE END OF JANUARY. HE APPARENTLY IS PUTTING HIS HOPES ON THE EXPECTED MEETING OF CENTRAL AMERICAN PRESIDENTS LATE THIS MONTH.

9. BOWDLER IS HAVING LUNCH WITH BATRES TODAY. SEPTTEL FOLLOWS. RUSH

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